

Interview with Frank Oram

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FRANK ORAM

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Q: Being interviewed is Frank Oram, retired Foreign Service officer of USIA. Frank began his career in foreign affairs nearly 50 years ago in 1941 when he received an appointment to the Foreign Service Auxiliary. By the time he retired in 1970, he had held such senior jobs as the Assistant Director of USIA for Latin America, and Country Public Affairs Officer in Spain, Brazil, and Argentina.

Prior to his career with USIA, his State Department duties involved him with the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, the liquidation of a number of wartime agencies in Washington and in the field at the end of World War II, the reorganization of the Department of State, and the creation and organization of the U.S. Information Agency in 1953.

1941: Entry Into Foreign Service Auxiliary

Q: Frank, when you first joined the U.S. Government, how did you become a member of the Foreign Service Auxiliary, and what exactly was the Foreign Service Auxiliary?

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ORAM: I joined the government in March 1940 in the Federal Home Loan Bank Board. Having spent a fascinating year in Europe, from mid-1938 to mid-1939, I wanted to find an opening in international affairs. The Foreign Service in 1940 was a very small, closely knit group of officers faced with what were going to be very large increases in responsibilities. To meet the need for more personnel the Foreign Service Auxiliary Authority was created whereby there could be short-term appointments—what we came to know later on as Foreign Service Reserve appointments.

Assigned To Rio de Janeiro

In September 1941 that is the appointment that I was given, assigned to Rio de Janeiro first and then to Sao Paulo. The first two cultural officers assigned in the Foreign Service Auxiliary were Bill Cody, who had a long distinguished career in USIA and Herschel Brickell. They were the first cultural attach#s in the U.S. Foreign Service. Brickell was assigned to Bogota, Colombia, and Bill Cody was assigned to Asuncion, Paraguay.

Q: Was this the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs at that time, or did that come later?

ORAM: The Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs was created in 1940 by President Roosevelt who appointed Nelson Rockefeller as Coordinator, much to the dismay of people like Sumner Welles, who considered Latin America his own private preserve as Under Secretary of State.

Nature Of Programs Combined In The OfficeCoordinator Of Inter-American Affairs

The Rockefeller authority included establishing information programs, cultural programs, binational centers, libraries, and what later became known as the technical assistance activities—called *servicios*—in agriculture, health, and education. It's a historic fact that, before we ever got into the war, these important functions were already in existence in Latin America and provided a basis for later expansion in the Point Four Program. The

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Inter-American Treaty of Buenos Aires in 1936 had included a very strong provision for cultural cooperation among the American republics.

Q: I find that very interesting—the mix between cultural, information, and technical assistance—because USIA, in later years, has always shied away from anything to do with technical assistance, leaving it for AID.

ORAM: Rockefeller had this broad mandate, and since it was under one authority and funded through one budget, the various parts were all easily fitted together.

Q: You didn't see any conflict between...

ORAM: Not when the headquarters in Washington was one office. When it's two or three, that's something else.

Q: Were you overseas then, at that time, with the

Transferred To Sao Paulo as Deputy Director For Southern Brazil

ORAM: Yes. I was assigned first to our Embassy in Rio, then to Sao Paulo where I was named Deputy Director of the Coordinator's Office for Sao Paulo and southern Brazil, the industrial heart of Brazil.

Q: That must have been quite a big operation.

ORAM: Yes, it was.

Q: You were involved then as Deputy Director in the cultural, informational, and technical assistance aspects?

ORAM: The Sao Paulo office was responsible for the information, cultural, and some educational exchange programs. The technical assistance programs were headquartered in the Ministries of Agriculture, Education, and Health in Rio. The operating responsibility

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country-wide was vested in the Coordinator's Office in Rio, but there was very close collaboration with the Sao Paulo office.

Q: You mentioned in this note about FDR and the battleship.

ORAM: It just shows how times change. FDR went to this 1936 conference in Buenos Aires to personalize his “good neighbor” policy, and he arrived in a great big battleship. That was thought to be quite the style. That was the way to do it.

Q: Times have changed.

ORAM: Of course, this was 1936, three years before the first Pan Am Clipper crossed the Atlantic.

Q: Then in 1942, you also note here about Brazilian troops going to Italy.

1942: Brazil Decides to Send Troops To European War—Vernon “Dick” Walters Gets Start to High Office As Liaison For Brazilian Troops With Allies

ORAM: One of the big tasks, of course, was to convey to Latin America generally, and most particularly to Brazil, the nature of the war that was going on and to get Brazil into the war. Finally, in August of 1942, Brazil did join the U.S. There were a number of enticements, including a U.S. commitment to a \$100 million steel mill (big money in those days), but Brazil did get aboard. The Brazilian Expeditionary Force was formed and sent to Italy. Vernon Walters, or “Dick” Walters as he's known, then a young Army officer, was assigned to the Brazilian contingent as liaison because of his language abilities, and that's where his very illustrious career began to take off.

Q: So when the Brazilian troops went to Italy, that in a sense was evidence of the effectiveness of the Coordinator's program.

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ORAM: No question about it. Also our ambassador at that time, Jefferson Caffery, the perfect example of the traditional ambassador, quite removed from operations and all that sort of thing. His work with Getulio Vargas was very important.

Q: Vargas was the President at that time.

ORAM: The President of Brazil, yes.

Q: What year, then, did you leave Brazil and come back to Washington?

Early 1946: Oram Returns To U.S.; Participates In State Department Reorganization Which Sets Up Cultural And Information Program In State Bureau Of Latin American Affairs

ORAM: Early 1946.

Q: Then you were involved in the reorganization of the State Department?

ORAM: Many activities were being liquidated at that point. The idea was that all these war-time functions would disappear, but what was going to become evident shortly was a new kind of war, the Cold War. So, on the one hand there was liquidation, and on the other an effort to strengthen the Foreign Service. The Foreign Service Act of 1946 gave the Service broader scope and additional officers. The Manpower Act authorized 200 new officer positions. I was asked to participate in several committees that were involved in this whole reorganization effort. One task applied very particularly to public affairs and involved a group of us, including Bill Cody who, by this time, was back in Washington as head of the program staff of the Information and Cultural Program of the State Department and the Foreign Service. Our purpose was to design the first regional geographic bureau with public affairs fully integrated within the bureau. That was the Latin American Bureau designated as ARA (American Republic Area), which became the pattern for the other geographic bureaus of the Department.

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Q: It was a pilot.

ORAM: Yes.

Q: That's what I was going to ask you. The informational, cultural, and educational exchange activities prior to that had been handled how—before they came into the State Department?

Coordinator's Office Liquidated in 1945; Functions Given To State

ORAM: The Coordinator's Office was responsible for all such activities including budget support. The Foreign Service, however, appointed cultural attach#s to embassies. They didn't have any budgets. The Coordinator's Office was where the money was. In the field there was cooperation between embassy or consulate and the Coordinator's Office to conduct program activities. The Coordinator's Office was liquidated as a war-time agency at the end of 1945, and any remaining functions went to State.

Q: You were also involved, I believe—and certainly you were in Washington at the time—when USIA was created in 1953. Can you tell us how that came about?

Birth of USIA—1953; Cultural Programs Remain In Department Of State

ORAM: You recall that Ike won in 1952 after 20 years of Democrats in the Executive Branch. There was a very strong interest on the part of Republicans, naturally, to establish their way of doing things and to bring in their own people. The Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, had very clear views as to what he wanted and didn't want. One thing he did not want was to have any responsibility for the Voice of America and the other information operations. McCarthyism was at a high pitch at that point, and life was a bit complicated. Senator Fulbright was another big factor because he had created what came to be known as the Fulbright Program. He had a very personal interest in educational exchange and

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where it would be in the government hierarchy. He concluded that it had to remain in the State Department. Somehow it would lose a certain value if it were not.

Given the strong views of these two gentlemen, both positioned to see that their views were heard and followed, the concept evolved of a USIA in Washington with educational exchange remaining in State but with an integrated overseas operation— USIS—for all information, cultural, and educational exchange programs. This contrived arrangement caused problems and confusion at the beginning and over the years, but it was a pragmatic resolution under the prevailing circumstances.

It's interesting to see what was happening at the same time with the economic agencies which had been outside State during and after the war. The effort was to bring them inside State and to achieve policy control over them.

This is at the same time, 1953, that USIA was created as an independent agency. Thus, as information was being removed from State, relieving it of all personnel and budget responsibilities, the economic agencies were being brought in through policy control at the top. The economic agencies included what had been known as Point Four. The question always is —why is it Point Four? I suppose I should ask you that question.

Q: Well, I don't know the answer. Can you tell me?

ORAM: Yes. The answer is in President Truman's speech in 1949 that had four major points. The first was the UN. The second point was NATO. The third was GATT (the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade). The fourth point lacked a ready label, and reporters asked, "What is this fourth point?", so they simply kept referring to it as "point four." In very short order, "Point Four" became the caption to describe technical assistance and economic development.

Q: At the same time there was some experimentation going on with country planning?

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ORAM: USIA was, in my recollection, the first foreign affairs agency to do that. As a matter of fact, one year—this was before USIA when Ed Barrett was Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs and responsible for all information, cultural, and educational exchange programs—his budget presentation to Congress was organized not on the customary functional pattern but by countries. Congressman John Rooney, whom many of us recall as chairman of the subcommittee which controlled the funds for USIA, State, and the FBI, rejected Barrett's presentation and told him to take it back and redo in the functional pattern.

The reason was that all of his familiar markers as to what was going up or down—his way of tracking budget change—didn't apply when budgets were organized by countries. Now Congressional criticism up to that point had been, "Aren't you supposed to be country specific? You have a program in the country. What is it you are trying to do and how do you show what you have done?"

That kind of badgering was typical at the time. So, the reaction was, "Well, we'll give him country budgets and country plans to respond to his questions." But this denied him his necessary control devices.

Q: But eventually everybody came back to country planning.

ORAM: Eventually, country planning was established as an internal device, but the USIA presentation to Congress had to be on the functional basis.

1954: Oram Becomes Assistant Director, USIA For Latin America

Q: When the Agency was established, you were the first area director for Latin America, weren't you?

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ORAM: No, I was the second. Bill Clarke was Director for Latin America from August 1953 to September 1954, and I was his deputy. When he was named Director for Europe, I became Director for Latin America.

Q: What were our major goals in that period?

Ted Streibert, First USIA Director Creates Area Offices

ORAM: The very first major goal for Area Directors was set by Ted Streibert the first USIA Director. When he agreed to become Director, a lot of people thought it was the worst decision he could have made from himself. It seemed to be an impossible situation. Ted was a direct-action person, and he concluded that he needed four people to represent him personally, to get out in the field and convey his philosophy, policies, views, and to do it immediately and with repeated trips. It got to the point where his question was: "Why are you back here and not out in the field?"

Q: You as area director were supposed to be his eyes and ears.

ORAM: Eyes and ears, and physically in the field, talking over problems while they were still small and manageable, conveying what Streibert wanted very much—a personal touch. So he said, "Each of you has my authority to act on problems as you see them. Don't buck everything back here. Settle as much as you can on the spot." I think that approach was essential for pulling together the personnel of the new agency and building a sense of strong leadership.

Q: It also gave the Area Directors as much power as they'd ever had, I imagine, didn't it?

ORAM: I think that's right. In all fairness, after the Agency was well established and had some esprit de corps, that original need no longer existed. I can understand why later the scope of the area director's authority could be diminished or restricted somewhat. Of

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course, there's always the issue between area and media directors as to who has the final veto. In the first several years, there was no question. The areas had the final veto.

Q: Going back for a moment, you mentioned when we were talking earlier about the term "Stassenated." What does that mean?

ORAM: This concerned the several economic agencies that had been established in the years since 1946. The question in 1953 was how to pull everything together under one head in full control. Harold Stassen, always running for President, was named Administrator of the Foreign Operations Administration (FOA).

Q: Is that what is AID, Agency for International development, today? Or its equivalent at that time, more or less?

ORAM: Yes. The first priority that Stassen was charged with was to clean house. The people that were being sacked or reduced to lower rank...

Q: They were "Stassenated"?

ORAM: They were "Stassenated," that's right. Harold Stassen had done his job.

Some USIA Goals For Latin America

Q: When you were area director, I gather that among the important things were social and economic development and support for democratic government, etc. At that time there was also the Atoms for Peace Project.

ORAM: Yes, that was a new concept. We're talking now of the mid-1950s. Latin America was not yet feeling its political and economic problems which were apparent but not yet of crisis proportions. During this period there was great interest in establishing binational centers, in learning English.

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Vice President Nixon's Unfortunate Latin American Visit

The most concentrated expression of anti-American feeling occurred just as I was ending my tour when Vice President Nixon made his unfortunate goodwill tour of eight Latin American capitals in May 1958. I may say that he did not lack advice as to what he was going to get into because the student anti-US agitation was already very evident. His first stop in Uruguay really set the tone. He met with university students and responded to their challenges and criticisms with clear, forthright statements—very good statements. His readiness to meet and debate was interpreted by the activists that they should now organize better and really go after him. So, at every stop from that point on, the degree and type of agitation grew and grew until, in Caracas, he came within an inch of being killed.

Q: That was his second stop in Caracas?

ORAM: No, that was his eighth and last stop. With every city this agitation mounted. By the time he got to Lima, there were big street riots. Looking back, you'd think that at some point some one would have concluded that there had to be a point when the schedule would be changed, but Mr. Nixon was very determined to complete the tour.

Q: He was vice president then.

ORAM: Yes, he was vice president. He was very determined and, at every stop, he made very clear forthright statements about where the U.S. stood on this or that issue. He would not be faced down. He was not going to give in to any agitation.

In Caracas—you know how Caracas is one-way streets, narrow. The mob stopped the motorcade and started beating on the Nixon car, breaking the windows. Dick Walters, who was in the car as interpreter, got glass in his face and eyes. It was just pure luck that the mob didn't get totally out of hand.

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After this unfortunate event the many latent problems in Latin America began to show themselves more clearly, except for one factor that is always underestimated, I am sorry to say, and that is population pressure. The birth rate in Latin America had continued very high while the death rate was lower and lower. So the annual increase in population was extreme. When you add the factor of rural migration to the cities, you soon had in every city larger numbers of unemployed youth, many with no chance for employment.

Q: Any inclination, even more than today, to blame Uncle Sam for it?

ORAM: Yes. In so many ways Latin America depended on our trade and aid. It is quite understandable that that would be the reaction.

Q: At that time there were many more authoritarian governments in Latin America than there are today.

ORAM: Yes. Peron still was in Argentina. I remember an exchange between Peron and Ted Streibert and Senator Hickenlooper about catching trout. Senator Hickenlooper had just been in La Paz where he had gone out fishing on Lake Titicaca at 13,000 feet altitude and had caught a trout which, by the time they weighed it, was still over 34 pounds. Senator Hickenlooper was sure that it was over 36 pounds, which would have been the record had they weighed it promptly because things at that high altitude dry out very rapidly indeed. Peron couldn't let this go. He urged the Senator to visit "our lakes down south," almost saying he would personally put a 36-pound trout on the Senator's hook.

Q: Since you were over in Spain afterwards and Peron was over there at that time, did you ever have a chance to talk with Peron when he was in Madrid?

ORAM: No, and I didn't seek it.

Role of Area Directors In Overseas Personnel Selection In 1950s

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Q: Let me shift to another subject here, going back to when you were area director. What kind of personnel system was in effect in USIA in those days? Did the area director get involved in selection personnel, even down to assistant CAOs?

ORAM: Yes, very much so. As a matter of fact, going back to the original Streibert concept, we should get competitive people, people who were “doers.” He had a thing about doing. You may have a lot of brainpower, but the point was also to act. He wanted active people. He stressed that to us and relied on us to get as many of that sort as possible and to weed out those that were more philosophical about their daily work.

Q: When you left after being area director, I think you were a member of the first class of the Senior Seminar at the Foreign Service Institute?

ORAM: That's correct.

Oram Was Member Of First Department of State Senior Seminar Class

Q: Would you care to comment about that?

ORAM: It was a very unusual experience. As a matter of fact, half a dozen of us have just finished drafting a 30-year history of the Senior Seminar. The Senior Seminar was a belated effort by the State Department to carry out the academic purpose of the Foreign Service Act of 1946, which was to create training at the highest level for foreign affairs, similar to military affairs at the National War College. For years, the Foreign Service Institute did not have the budget or the leadership to do this. Finally, President Eisenhower personally involved himself. His Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, knew very clearly that Ike believed that the State Department should take real leadership in training foreign affairs specialists. The Senior Seminar was the expression of that leadership. Some of us felt it should have been a larger effort, even in its first year.

Q: How many people were in it then?

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ORAM: Nineteen. It has remained truly a “seminar” in that the number has never been more than 30. In that first year we had a remarkable array of speakers. The routine was that you would meet with the speaker in the morning, have lunch together, and discuss further in the afternoon the subject of the day.

I remember when Adolf Berle paid us a compliment. He said, “I’ve been lecturing at the National War College since 1946 when it was established. I have a well organized lecture, but I won’t use it today because I just realized, as I looked over my well honed text, that there would be in this group at least one person who could challenge me seriously on a given subject. That doesn’t happen at the War College because it’s a large group in a formal setting. You’re speaking on the record, and besides they are military experts in tanks, infantry, etc., not in foreign policy. So let us sit and talk.” It turned out to be one of the most enjoyable sessions of the year. Later Henry Kissinger met with us. At that time he was a professor at Harvard and author of a new book on nuclear problems.

Q: Ike passed out the diplomas?

ORAM: That’s right. Our quarters that first year were the remodeled laundry area adjoining the parking garage on the basement level of the old Arlington Towers across the river in Rosslyn. The President came over across the river to those crowded little quarters where we were gathered with our wives, and he personally graduated each one of us. He made his interest crystal clear. He said he was not embarrassed to seek money for this effort and he wished it to prosper.

Then he recalled a bit of history by noting that when he was born, there was one U.S. ambassador—now there are 77—a very large undertaking which needs all of the training and effort that we can put into it. He was fully behind the Senior Seminar.

Q: When is this 30-year history supposed to be published, and where?

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ORAM: The Senior Seminar Alumni Association is the sponsor. The arrangement is that it will probably come out as a State Department publication.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to say about the Agency's early days before we move on to your experiences in Spain?

Diversion: An Historical Look Backward At USIA's Early Days And State's Foreign Service As It Was Between Two World Wars

ORAM: I would say that, considering the various handicaps confronting us at the beginning in 1953, the USIA and the people in it have done well. There were then lots of reasons why we should have viewed the future with some pessimism—the challenges to get and hold talented people, to operate worldwide programs. After all, we were entirely on our own, and we had to fight the annual budget battle on the Hill with Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman John Rooney on his rather perverse terms. If you asked for something, he'd say, “No.” But if anybody else said you couldn't have something, John Rooney would say, “Yes, they can.” He was very possessive about what he thought the Agency should be doing and how much money it should have.

Tremendous credit goes to Ted Streibert for those three years that he devoted to USIA. It was a tremendous personal accomplishment.

Q: It was a good foundation considering it lasted 36 years. There are some people in Washington today who would like to see USIA broken up.

ORAM: There will always be differing views—whether to go back to the original concept of foreign service, the idea of a small-knit family as shown in the 1936 yearbook—did I mention that?

Q: No.

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ORAM: Once the Foreign Service put out a yearbook, like a college yearbook, in 1936 with the photographs of over 600 officers. There was very much a sense of family and club. You have to remember that, in those days, there were no programs or operations other than consular work and visa processing which is why consular officers were always looked down on by the diplomatic officers.

We should recall that before World War II nearly all of Africa and much of the Near East and Asia were colonial areas administered by London, Paris, The Hague, Brussels, and Lisbon. There were relatively few (compared to today) sovereign countries, and few of those rated ambassadorial status. Consequently, it was possible for a small Foreign Service to function effectively, strongly staffed in a few major capitals and supported by numerous consular outposts. The first significant expansion of the Foreign Service since the 1924 Rogers Act occurred in 1939 when the Commerce Department Trade Commissioners were transferred to State and the Foreign Service as Foreign Service Officers and Commercial Attach#s—about 115 including some excellent talent such as Walter Donnelly who later became Ambassador to Venezuela and High Commissioner in Vienna.

Q: That came in from where, the Department of Commerce?

ORAM: The trade commissioners? That's right. As trade developed after World War I, the Department of Commerce set up trade commissions attached to embassies or in separate offices.

Q: But did not report to the State Department.

ORAM: They reported to Commerce. Since policy was necessarily involved, however, there was an interest in the Department and the Foreign Service to have that policy responsibility within State and the Foreign Service.

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Q: So these people were brought, then, into State. Then some years later they were moved back to Commerce, weren't they?

ORAM: It's difficult in the economic area to separate strictly policy matters from trade promotion, trade exhibits, and other operations. I think that now, as then, there is still this difference of view as to whether all policy should be in one place, all operations somewhere else, or whether you have a blend of the two.

Q: This is a continuation of the interview with Frank Oram retired USIA officer who was former Assistant Director of USIA for Latin American and former country public affairs officer in Spain, Brazil and Argentina. Today, December 6, 1990 he will discuss some of his experiences in Spain. The interviewer is Allen Hansen and this interview is taking place in DACOR House in Washington, D.C.

Frank you were in Spain as PAO in what years?

ORAM: Mid 1959 to mid 1962.

Q: And what was the size of the USIA staff in those days?

ORAM: We had about 9 American positions.

Q: I see. And what were some of the major American interests and concerns in our relationship with Spain at that time?

ORAM: Well, they were increasingly vital in view of the cold war effort. Remember that Spain was still recovering from the civil war then in 1939. The economy was weak, political issues were suppressed by Franco. There was a very strong hand of the government in everything. And Spain was not really accepted, the question of fascism, and the Falange, and so forth, was very real. It was worth recalling when President Eisenhower brought in John Foster Dulles, there was a concerted effort to develop reasons for countries around

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the world and bases. The base program was central and Spain was brought into this by the visit of Admiral Sherwin (phonetic), in 1953 which is the opening effort to gain what later became the forward SAC bases in Spain, Torrejon outside of Madrid and the Naval base in Rota. Spain, as I recall was excluded from the UN, for example, until 1955. Again because of the memories of World War II and Franco's "neutrality", but I think we have to remember that Hitler did not succeed in Spain as he had hoped to, as it were, dominate the Spanish peninsular. He did not succeed. Franco played his own cards for his own purposes. He played them very well.

By 1955, Ambassador Lodge came to Spain; the expressed purpose was to gradually develop an acceptance, a relationship with Spain, a workable relationship. The USIA role there was quite effective because Spain had been closed and very much isolated. The whole cold war propaganda effort was significant. There was the question of US military personnel actually in Spain, on base in Spain. We had to have a troop relations program. We had to reach out to Spaniards to try to develop what for other European countries was very normal ties. All this was new work in Spain.

Q: Were the America Weeks a program designed to smooth relations with so much American military there?

ORAM: Yes, it was a very good device of getting Spaniards and Americans together in a very simple setting to literally get to know each other. I think we have to remember that Spain as some say is more Catholic than the Pope and has a very, very strict code which was strange to many, many of the military and other Americans who found themselves living in Spain. The political tension in the Spanish society could be understood when you realize that when Alfonso XIII abdicated in 1931 the Republic came into being and disestablished the Church restricted the Church privileges and secularized education. This was a radical departure from the Spanish Church tradition. So, being suddenly exposed to the world, as it were in the late '50s was something new for Spaniards at every level.

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Q: The Catholic Church had always played a major role in—

ORAM: And under Franco it was restored, of course. And there was a very strong Church role throughout the Spanish society at all levels, yes.

Q: Were there any indications then that the Spanish political system was moving towards a more democratic form?

ORAM: Well, there were signs, but then the figure of Franco was so dominate that a great deal was discounted and of course the question always was, "After Franco what?" Well, now we can see 30 years later that Franco actually prepared a transition into a modernized Spain. Not he alone, but the role of Juan Carlos as the young king, of course was vital too. But it was clearly a great transition and the whole question of ideas and information overcoming the years of suppression, censorship, etc., and the conflict between socialists and communists on the one side and the monarchists and conservatives on the other. All of that was part of the mix.

One of the amusing things to me was that there was a ministry called the Ministry of Information and Tourism headed by an old line Falangist who I am sure hadn't had a new idea in a long while. On the one hand he was the chief censor, that's what information meant. Information did not mean giving out information, it meant control of information. On the other hand his assignment was to bring tourists to Spain because that would be profitable. At that time the only tourist in any numbers that came into Spain were the French across the border up near San Sebastian, who brought their own cheese and bread with them and spent practically nothing inside the country. Whereas Italy had already developed a flourishing tourist trade which was held up as a model. So this ministry was suppose to be doing these two totally contradictory things at the same time.

Q: And what was the Spanish economy like in those days?

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ORAM: It was weak. It had been isolated and you must remember the Civil War cost Spain a million dead in a population of 20-25 million people. The economy was totally ruined. And the recovery was long and very slow.

Q: And the U.S. Government at that time was criticized in some quarters for what people said was getting into bed with Franco.

ORAM: True and with good reason, because Franco symbolized an aspect of World War II and earlier. We have to remember the Lincoln brigade from the United States and the role of the Germans, Italians and the Russians, and so forth in the mid-30's. This was what everyone understood to be the great ideological conflict and it had all occurred there in Spain. And the idea of getting together in any practical way with the very person who symbolized all this was a serious issue for many and understandable.

Q: And one of the reasons the military agreements were signed between the U.S. and Spain, if I recall, was that we had lost our bases in Morocco.

ORAM: Yes, yes that is true. The location of Spain was central, there was no question about it. The forward SAC base was right outside of Madrid and if you knew where to look when you drove out to the airport you would see the high tails way off on the horizon and at that particular stage given the capability of planes and so forth and so on, Spain's location was essential.

Q: So would you say that there were at least two major reasons for the bases: a need for the bases to act as a deterrent against the Soviet Union at the time, on any other, or the efforts that were made, particularly where USIS played a major role in at least helping those forces who wanted to see the country become more democratic.

ORAM: Yes, very much so.

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Q: There are some authors, I think, that say today that Spain was a good example for some Latin American countries that had suffered from dictatorship in the past. Would you agree?

ORAM: Well yes, Spain has been a model for a number of Latin American countries. The role of Argentina during World War II is relevant here. It is quite natural to look at what Franco was doing in his own way and try to do the same thing maybe not for the same reason but similar reasons.

Q: The end result is certainly interesting as we look at Spain today.

ORAM: Yes.

Q: The physical plant of USIS. You were located in the Embassy and had a library...

ORAM: Well, yes. That was the Casa Americana. The Embassy was one of the new efforts of the Department's Foreign Buildings Association so it was a newly constructed building.

Q: Didn't the Spaniards call it a pigeon roost because it was a rectangular shape?

ORAM: Well, it was two things actually. One was a rectangle on end which was the office part and the other was a 3-story horizontal level of living quarters which was the Residence. But Ambassador Lodge refused to live in the Residence because he felt that he would do much better in a typical Spanish residence. And I certainly think he was right about that. Well that large establishment was empty and so it became the USIS headquarters, including a library, a large printing plant which was located where the kitchens would have been...

Q: And a theater also.

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ORAM: Oh yes, a lovely theater. Yes, it was excellent. And facing on a park area with lots of trees.

Q: What about the Fulbright Program. Was that just beginning or...

ORAM: You mean beginning in Spain?

Q: Yes.

ORAM: Yes, yes. It was a very important means of drawing Spaniards out and getting them in touch with American institutions. Here again there had been these years and years of literally no contact. And often what contact there might have been was tempered by the political issue which was always in between the individual Spaniard and what he might want to do in his own professional way such as traveling and writing freely, and so on. The Fulbright program was a very important instrument, yes.

Q: And how were the working relations between USIS and the rest of the US mission?

ORAM: From my point of view they were quite comfortable and we had a very effective country team. The country team included everyone even the military from the JUSSMAG, the Joint U.S. Spanish Military Mission. It met religiously every week chaired by the Ambassador and there was a full exchange of views.

Q: Was there a large AID program?

ORAM: Well, the AID program wasn't large in numbers of projects or people. It was mainly a matter of extending credits and getting certain aspects of the economy moving. But Dick Aldrich, you recall, who was minister-counselor and director of the AID program was very effective.

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Q: I wonder if you will comment a little bit on how the culture of the U.S. and the culture of Spain interacted. For example, during Eisenhower's visit.

ORAM: Well, as a general proposition, I think that one doesn't realize how different Spain is from the rest of Western Europe. The Moors came in to, actually they were Berbers, came in to Spain in 711, as I recall, and stayed there until 1492. The big date for Spaniards was not Columbus doing something in 1492, that was the year that the last Moors, the last Muslims, left Spain. The Kingdom of Granada fell in 1492. That was the big event. And that of course was when Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand decreed that all those Muslims and Jews in Spain, and there were many, had to convert or get out. This was a very difficult period. This was the period of the Inquisition and so forth. And the events of that period of the 15th, 16th, 17th centuries are very real to the typical educated Spaniard or even to the Spaniard who was filled with the folklore and traditions of the country. Thus Americans are apt to find rather strange that there is such a hold, as it were, of this old tradition on the way things should be done currently.

And we had an example of that in the visit of President Eisenhower. First let me mention that this is President Eisenhower in 1959, December 1959, which was more than 6 years after the initial opening by Admiral Sherwin in 1953. In other words there was nothing hasty about what President Eisenhower and Secretary Dulles laid out as a program. It was slowly, gradually, steadily developed relationship with Spain, both diplomatic and public—

Q: And this was the first U.S. Presidential visit?

ORAM: Yes. This was nearing the end of Ike's term. It was laid on after the annual NATO meeting in Paris and he would come to Madrid, there would be a banquet and then he would fly off. It was timed out of 23 hours on almost the shortest day of the year. Jim Hagerty, who was more than Ike's press officer, was in charge of all the doings. One of my assignments was to work out the details of the arrival, etc. This was to be a public meeting but restrained, not a hoopla and all that, just public meeting. So of course TV by that time

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was already the information medium for this sort of thing in Europe and the United States although very limited in Spain I might add. The focus was to be on the meeting of the two generals and then underplay all the rest of it. That meant that the whole arrival ceremony had to work just right. So the White House set up an advance post in the embassy and we were all working hard at this and along came the lay out scenario for the arrival and I went over to the Foreign Office to discuss this with my opposite number.

In the middle of my presentation he said, "That, we cannot accept." I said, "What is it you cannot accept?" He said, "You don't have the procession correct." I said, "The procession?" He said, "The arrangement of cars coming out of the airport and driving down the big avenue." This was where everyone was to be assembled and see all this, where the television cameras would be grinding away. He said, "You have it all backwards." I said, "I'm sorry this is what the White House does any time at a ceremony of this sort." "No, we don't do it that way," he said. "Under our protocol, which I remind you dates back to before Queen Isabella and which we have followed very carefully ever since, the principals are preceded by all of the underlings." I said, "You mean to tell me that there is going to be this long procession of limousines, etc., and at the very end there is going to be General Franco and President Eisenhower?" He said, "That's the way we always do it." So I said, "Well I'm sure we are going to have a battle because the hour of the day, getting dark and so forth will not be received very well." I reported this back and of course we got an absolute blast about it.

Q: Just the opposite of the American way of doing it.

ORAM: Right. So I went back the next day and said, "Look, we've got to work this out." "No, not a chance," he said. I said, "Well, what you are saying then is because of your protocol which you remind me was established before we were ever discovered you are going to forego television coverage of this event. It will not be seen anywhere in this country, in Europe, in the United States." I said, "We can't do that. We are coming here for a visit, a public visit. We are not coming here in the middle of the night so that nobody

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knows we are here.” I said, “This is the moment to do what both governments have been working on for some years. And to do that Franco and Eisenhower have got to be at the front with only one vehicle ahead of them and that is a TV truck.” Fortunately, he, who had had an assignment in New York, personally knew all this, but the people he had to deal with didn't. To make a long story short, after a week or so of obviously very difficult internal debates they finally agreed that for this occasion to drop their protocol and adopt the American system. Even so we had to hurry because it was getting so dark so fast. But it did get televised.

Q: And like any Presidential visit USIS was very much in the thick of things.

ORAM: Well, that is right. There were two action officers, I was one and the other was my opposite number, Bill Fairley, the political counselor. The two of us were in charge of the whole thing.

Q: Do you recall any particular problems or did everything work out okay? Other than the protocol problem.

ORAM: Well, no, there were no problems with substance because it was agreed there would be no substance, whatsoever, it would be strictly formalities. So the National Palace, the War Palace, in Madrid, has nearly 3,000 rooms and in the great hall there is a table that seats 140 people. I remember that banquet, it was quite a sight. The 140 chairs were filled and both President Eisenhower and General Franco made their toasts. And I said to Dick Walters, who was traveling with us as an interpreter that he had rendered Ike's toast and marks in marvelous fashion. He impressed the Spanish tremendously, that this American could speak Spanish with feeling and deliver it the way Ike could deliver it. So Jim Hagerty who at first was in every bit of this was personally very, very pleased with how it went off.

Q: And what was the general reception of the Spanish people to Eisenhower's visit?

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ORAM: Very well, because even those who didn't understand maybe the international complications of this fascist kind of hangover, this World War II image, had a naturally warm feeling towards Americans who were outgoing and simpatico, and they thought this was a very warm generous gesture by President Eisenhower. Well received.

Q: I guess in a short activity like that, a 23-hour visit of the President, as well as in the longer range things, USIS has had a vital role to play.

ORAM: Very much so. It is not often that one encounters a situation just of that sort where there are all these complications, all these negative elements in the historical background and yet something is obviously fermenting, opening up as a matter of coming in and making a real contribution towards understanding. And I am confident Juan Carlos who I knew as a teenager at that time in Madrid was exposed to many, many things. He was not as has been true of some royal heirs restricted in a way, or indoctrinated in an essentially negative way. He wasn't and this is a credit to his father, Don Juan, who stepped aside, as well as to Franco. Juan Carlos personally was encouraged to open up and be exposed to ideas and the people.

Q: Well, I think I have asked you the questions that I had in mind and we covered your other experiences on the other tape. Is there anything more that you might want to say either about Spain or about any of the other countries where you worked and when you were Assistant Director of USIA for Latin America?

ORAM: Well, I was struck by the fact that President Bush being in Brasilia and...

Q: You mean just a couple of days ago.

ORAM: Just a couple of days ago...

Q: And still in Chili today.

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ORAM: But knowing in Brazil that there was a military revolt in his second stop—in Argentina. He was in Argentina yesterday, wasn't he?

Q: Yes.

ORAM: And greeting the Argentine President and congratulating him on moving toward democracy and away from dictatorship. The Latin ability to fall into the dictatorship trap is, of course, well documented. I certainly hope that Argentina is going to keep moving ahead.

Q: You mentioned earlier about the Berbers ruling Spain.

ORAM: Yes.

Q: There were 7 centuries...

ORAM: Nearly 8 centuries...

Q: Nearly 8 centuries of Moorish rule or Arabic rule over the Iberian Peninsula. Do you see that reflected in Spanish culture today and taking it a step further, in Latin American culture?

ORAM: Well, I think the Arab influx never conquered all of Spain. They never got into the northwest. And over the years the northern Spaniards gradually ate away at the Moorish kingdom so the relationship was always one of on the one hand conquest and then re-conquest. Now a great number of people during these nearly 800 years before the Kingdom of Granada collapsed in 1492, there was a great number of Catholics, for example, that became Muslim; or Jews that became Muslim or remained Jews. I don't know whether middle class was accurate for that time period, but there was a fairly large number of people between the nobility, let's say and the peasants. The shopkeepers, the merchants, etc., a fairly large element. When the decree was laid down that you either become Catholic and convert openly, publicly and practice Catholicism or get out, and this

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was at the height of the Inquisition, this meant that a large, I don't know what the numbers were, but a large portion of this shopkeeper, and merchant class, professionals, too, left Spain. But I am not sure how you could define the Spaniard today in Muslim terms. As far as I know it would be to say that Spain was not a participant in the Renaissance as it occurred in Europe. It held on to all those things that it succeeded in keeping up in northern Spain from the Moors or in regaining by reconquering the Moorish kingdoms so that they had this fix on earlier times and situations. When the Renaissance came along it missed Spain almost entirely.

The greatest influence on Spain was opening up the new world and suddenly becoming enormously wealthy. So it could afford all kinds of ventures such as the Spanish Armada—which from anybody's point of view was extremely disorganized. In other words what happened in Spain and this does have bearing on Latin America they had the appearance of greatness because they had this money but it was destroying its own economy. I remember being told that Spain had quite a wool, weaver trade in the 1400s but lost it in the 1500s to the British because they, the Spaniards, had the money and just bought the material, they didn't need to make it any longer. The idea of the appearance of wealth and acting as if one had a solid base in the wealth was something which over the long run was damaging to Spain. It inhibited Spain's development as a modern country. And there is no question that the Spanish model has been a great influence throughout Latin America. It is a model which has had in it many, many limitations, many negatives.

Q: Perhaps Spain being behind Western Europe the way it was as the Franco era ended in the same way, sort of stagnation of political development, it was the Spanish influence imposed upon Latin America, Spanish speaking Latin America, the same type of thing happened.

ORAM: Well, I think so. For example, the land system. We all know in Latin America that in a typical country the chances of a poor person ever owning any land is a literal impossibility.

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Q: Brazil, I was reading the other day, one percent of the population owns...

ORAM: That's right.

Q: 95% of the land.

ORAM: Brazil currently has the greatest gap between the top and the bottom. In the whole world, the greatest gap. This is the Iberian tradition, both in Portugal and Spain. They had all of this land, just as there is all this land in the United States. But, except for Costa Rica, it wound up in the hands of a few people. Costa Rica as far as I recall is the only country in Latin America where there is something like a small farmer who actually owns his own land. This helps explain why Costa Rica is so much different from everybody else. This model of the established gentry, landed gentry, was the idea that everyone has his place, there is a permanence in things. You are born here and you stay at that level, born up here you stay at that level. You have the means by being born to it to continue to be at the high level. The idea of mobility, up and down, has been foreign to Spain as it was throughout Europe, but Spain did not have the benefit of the Renaissance and other influences. So in effect the Spanish system was simply transplanted into a new virgin continent and Latin America pays the price every day for that tradition. It is so difficult to break.

Q: And that makes it even more dramatic the political development of Spain in the post-Franco era.

ORAM: Oh yes, yes. And again, tremendous credit is due Juan Carlos as the symbol.

Q: And no doubt, although the strong US-Spanish relationship was based on the military bases, there must have been some tremendous influence on the part of rubbing shoulders with the Americans at that time.

ORAM: Yes. No question about it.

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Q: Well, very interesting. Is there anything else?

ORAM: I'd just like to comment that I am sure that anyone who is looking around the world today with all the changes occurring the last 12 months will have to go back to the books and think through what foreign policy objects are and what the USIA role is, etc. After 40 some years of concentration on the cold war problem and its many aspects there is now a new deck of cards which is a bit different. It must be a fascinating time for younger officers who are going off on jobs the way you and I once did.

Q: The two major objectives of USIA over the past 40 years were the anti-communism on the negative side, you might say, and on the positive side the benefits as we saw them of the free private enterprise and political freedoms and democracy. That hasn't changed has it?

ORAM: Well, no...

Q: I mean the anti-communism thing, of course...

ORAM: One of Ed Murrow's formulations was under the word modernization as a transition from something to something. The USIA role is as interpreter, demonstrator of what is what, into what, by what means.

This reminds me of a friend of mine who just came back from a trip to Russia. He mentioned his experience concerning telephone books. He was told there were no telephone books in Moscow, but there are a fair number of telephones. The surprising thing that he was told was that people didn't want their names in a telephone book. The statement was, "I know my number, I give my number to people I know because I want them to have my number, so why in the world should I want anyone else to know my number?" Just stop and think about that for a minute. That means that there is an infinite range of things that are impossible to do. There is no concept of advertising, let's say, or even the simple things like a voluntary effort of some sort, a phone bank, you know. All

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these things are not only foreign but not wanted even when told they would have some benefit.

Why do they feel that way? Well, this fellow feels that way because he grew up in a place where information was dangerous. You didn't want to know certain things. You didn't want to be involved because it would be dangerous. Very simple. He was very logical in his point of view. There are no credit cards in Russia, are there? I believe they have yet to establish the first credit card.

Well, in Spain where after the years and years of the fighting to the death down in all the villages, killing of priests, what ever it was, the feelings about the problem became so real that the constant propaganda from government sources and so forth on this, that and the other thing, lead Spaniards to become highly skeptical about a lot of things. Very suspicious. It took some doing to say well, now wait lets look at what the real facts are, let's start building these little blocks together, stepping stones. So you are right, that is a constant as to the nature of the task.

Q: In our earlier discussion you had mentioned when you had referred to the Rockefeller organization that they had handled cultural information and technical and thinking as you mentioned there is a new role for USIA that perhaps remains to be defined and certainly discussed. Maybe it is time to come back to putting that all under, or at least closer together than it has been in the past. The technical being the modernization that could meet the needs of societies like the Soviet Union.

ORAM: That could well be.

Q: Well, anything else?

ORAM: No.

Q: Most interesting. Once again I want to thank you.

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ORAM: Thank you for the opportunity.

End of interview